

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 843

By Borchert

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Specialist Justin R. Blackwell, United States Army, of Paris.

WHEREAS, our nation was conceived by individuals who were willing to sacrifice their personal safety and concerns to ensure our individual and collective freedom, and the Volunteer State is especially proud to be the home of so many valiant men and women who have performed above and beyond the call of duty; and

WHEREAS, thousands of Tennesseans continue this time-honored tradition of volunteerism through service in the United States Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, one such courageous Volunteer, Specialist Justin R. Blackwell of 59th Military Police Company, 759th Military Police Battalion, 89th Military Police Brigade, stationed in Fort Carson, Colorado, died in pursuit of freedom and democracy for the people of Iraq; and

WHEREAS, like thousands of others of this Nation's sons and daughters, Specialist Blackwell did not shrink from serving in a combat zone, believing in the justice of the cause to protect our national security and liberty and to free the Iraqi people from the chains of injustice; and

WHEREAS, a beloved father, son, and brother, Specialist Blackwell now lies at rest in the sacred ground of America, which he loved so dearly and gave his life to protect; and

WHEREAS, by displaying the patriotism and honor for which he was well known, Justin Blackwell was the embodiment of the American hero; he believed deeply in America and the virtue of its cause, never hesitating to sacrifice himself to defend his beloved Nation, its citizens, or a fellow serviceman; and

WHEREAS, Specialist Blackwell was born July 18, 1980, in Stuttgart, Germany, to Stephen Blackwell, Sr., and Hazel King Blackwell; and

WHEREAS, Specialist Blackwell, a 1999 graduate of Henry County High School, enjoyed a life lived to the fullest, boldly rising to whatever challenge presented itself; and

WHEREAS, while in high school, he rendered sterling service as a member of the soccer team, the Swing Choir, and the Chess Club, which he was instrumental in founding; his friends knew him as a jokester who loved country music and professional wrestling; and

WHEREAS, a third-generation military man, Justin Blackwell upheld the finest traditions established by his family, whose military history stretches back to World War II; and

WHEREAS, on August 5, 2007, Specialist Blackwell, serving his third tour in Iraq, and another soldier were patrolling a section of Baghdad when they were hit and fatally wounded by a mortar attack; and

WHEREAS, this superlative soldier won the hearts of many, was deeply devoted to his family, and always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, he will be dearly missed by his parents; his beloved girlfriend, Allyson Gomez; his daughters, Abigail and Mackenzie Blackwell; his son, Joshua Blackwell, three brothers, Stephen Blackwell, Jr., a former member of the United States Navy, Specialist Vernon Blackwell, a member of the United States Army, and Second Lieutenant Nathan Blackwell, also a member of the United States Army; his grandfather, Robert Blackwell; his grandmother, Lorilla Ferris; his step-grandmother, Frances Blackwell; his aunts, Ruth Conrad, Lucille Shriver, Lori Kucerna, Kathie Wright, and Treva Harper, his uncles, James Blackwell, Boyd Blackwell, and Paul Blackwell; several nieces, nephews, and cousins and a host of friends and loved ones; and

WHEREAS, he was preceded in death by grandparents Vernon and Loma King; and

WHEREAS, this valiant Tennessean leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, a man of great courage and gallantry, Specialist Blackwell lost his life while serving his country and the cause in which he believed, and for that sacrifice, he deserves proper recognition; as a member of the United States Army, he proudly continued an essential tradition of American society: the concept of the dedicated soldier; and

WHEREAS, Specialist Blackwell's dedication to excellence and his love for his family, his fellow soldiers, and his country, as exemplified by his valiant defense of all that he held dear, stand as enduring examples of the characteristics that have ensured the continued freedom of our Nation and the preservation of its ideals over the course of our history; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly should pause to remember the singular patriotism, courage, and commitment to duty of this exceptional soldier and human being, the late Specialist Justin Blackwell, United States Army, whose loss is mourned by a grateful nation; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Specialist Justin R. Blackwell, a man of impeccable character, limitless courage, and stalwart commitment to the defense of his Nation as a member of the United States Army, reflecting fondly upon his bravery and dedication to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family and friends of Specialist Blackwell.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.